

**Coordinating Team  
Report to the Board of Trustees  
November 2021**

In addition to the financial and membership reports, the Coordinating Team (CT) brings the following items to the Board for your attention and awareness:

**Movement Back to In-Person Activities**

Beginning with the first Sunday in November, we pivoted yet again, this time to offering intentionally “hybrid” services. We can seat up to 60 people safely in our sanctuary (though seating configuration can significantly limit that). Given what we learned during September and October, we’re now working much more consciously to make sure that those accessing the service by our livestream—whether on Sunday morning or in its archived form—feel included in the experience.

We continue to monitor the data for our region, primarily through [https://covidactnow.org/us/metro/charlotte-concord-gastonia\\_nc-sc/?s=24201333](https://covidactnow.org/us/metro/charlotte-concord-gastonia_nc-sc/?s=24201333). While the situation has improved dramatically, we continue (as of Thursday, November 11) to be in the “High” risk category and, based on the aggregated data, this site reports that “Charlotte metro is more vulnerable than 79% of U.S. metros.” While there have been reports about removing the mask mandate in Mecklenburg County, this site definitely recommends that masks be worn indoors at this time.

We are evaluating both sign-ups and attendance for in-person attendance. Should a consistent need arise, we have discussed options including offering two services or offering overflow seating in Freeman Hall.

We have completed the installation of significantly more powerful exhaust fans in the restrooms in the office area and behind Freeman Hall. This now allows us to open two new meeting spaces. Currently, the Bernstein Room is available for groups up to 10 and the Conference Room is available for small groups of six or fewer people. We’re now able to accommodate up to 35 people in Freeman Hall in a safely distanced circle.

## Update on Memorial Endowment Trust Grant Projects

The Memorial Endowment Trust (MET) of the UUCB provides an opportunity for members to contribute financially to the life and well-being of the congregation through legacy gifts, memorial contributions, and other means of celebrating or honoring lives within our community. Members are invited in regular appeals to consider including the MET in their legacy giving. Members of the 2021-2022 MET board include Fred Dodson, Mary Ann Hendrick, Ellen Holliday, Patrick McNeely, Tom Nunnenkamp (chair) and Rita Heath Singer.

Years of careful cultivation and management by MET trustees have resulted in a balance sufficient to generate significant income. Each year the trustees determine the portion of that income available to support and enhance the work of the congregation through grant funding. The Memorial Endowment Trust awards grants for worthy projects that might not fit cleanly into our operating budget, but which support our Community's Vision and Mission.

This year, the MET board announced that they awarded \$39,000 to six different Grant proposals that have come from the Community, which include (with their status):

1. Outdoor Gathering Area with a Fire Pit located near the Memorial Garden and CYRE Classrooms: **Completed**
2. Updating Interior Signs and Banners: The Communications Team is awaiting design proposals from Fast Signs. This process is running slower than usual due to several staffing changes at Fast Signs.
3. Technology Upgrades to Create Hybrid Meeting/Learning Opportunities: The technology has been installed in both the Bernstein and Conference rooms. The wiring work has begun in Freeman Hall. We are now working on adding an additional camera in the Bernstein room and selecting the appropriate cameras for Freeman Hall.
4. Updating the Aesthetics of the Worship Experience: This work is underway. John Herrick and Judy Love are working together to identify and purchase flowers, art pieces and other forms of décor to add color and enhance the appearance of the Sanctuary.
5. Upgrades to allow for Internet/Wi-Fi access Throughout the Building: **Completed**

6. Marketing Grant: Alesia Hutto is working with the Communications Team and the Focus 2020 Task Group to develop a working structure that will help guide the work in hiring a marketing consultant and creating a marketing plan.

The generous contributions of our members to the Memorial Endowment Trust of the UUCC make their grant program possible.

### **Open Door School**

Our preschool, the Open Door School (ODS) Managing Team consists of— Suzanne Clements (chair), Marybeth Foster (FCA chair), Alesia Hutto (UUCC staff liaison), Sheila Locklear (ODS Director), Jen McGuire, Elaine Peed and Jim Van Fleet.

On Tuesday, September 7, the 2021-2022 school year officially began. ODS has higher than usual new staff, but all new staff have a former affiliation with ODS and are fully aware of the philosophy. Enrollment is almost at capacity with one opening in the 2's class and two openings in the 4/5's class. All other classes are full and currently have waiting lists.

ODS is now offering various services and activities to assist parents and children and to encourage community among its families. During the month of October, they offered speech and hearing screenings for our children and the Family Community Association (FCA) held a virtual school option night for parents interested in kindergarten enrollment. This event was well attended considering it was virtual. In addition, ODS staff has been working together to ensure that families are getting more personal interaction via Zoom, slide shows, families volunteering during outside play, and face to face outdoor meetings as needed.

As you may recall, the Managing Team received a grant from the Memorial Endowment Trust in 2020 for up to \$10,000 in matching funds for the Sue Riley Scholarship Fund. The Managing Team is now carrying out the second phase of the grant matching campaign. An ad hoc group that includes Alesia Hutto, Sheila Locklear, Jen McGuire, Suzy Moore and Elaine Peed is working on this effort. As of November 11, 2021, the campaign has collected approximately \$9,000. If you

wish to contribute, please [click here](#). Donations can be mailed to ODS (please include Sue Riley Scholarship Fund in the memo line). The campaign concludes on December 31, 2021.

### **Charting Member Participation**

For October, member participation increased to at least 51%, up from 40% in September. For in-person service viewing, we had an average of 17 per service. For virtual service viewing, we had an average of 89 per service. For our first in-person service for November, we had 41 attendees and 76 device views. In October, members also participated in a variety of in-person classes and other activities, including Trunk or Treat, a film discussion, a plant swap, greeter training and a class on our UU principles.

### **Sexton Update**

The search for our sexton began in July of 2021. Unfortunately, the two promising candidates reported in the month of October didn't result in filling the position. The current job market creates challenges for filling this position in the way that we intended. We are now exploring alternative options for filling the roles of this position. We will keep the Board informed about any updates as they become available.

### **UUCS CARES Fund**

**Fund Balance:** \$23,622.21

The UUCS made a lead gift of \$5000 to the Faith Community Eviction Prevention Fund being administered by Crisis Assistance Ministry from our CARES Fund. The congregation was informed of this decision in a *Currents* article on Thursday, November 11.

As a reminder, when we determine that there are no more pandemic related financial needs among our members, it has been our intention to transfer the

balance of this account to the “Ministers’ Discretionary Fund,” a fund that has historically been used to meet financial needs among our members and in the larger community.

### **Ongoing Activity**

We continue to strive to be a vital and engaged virtual congregation despite the many challenges that presents for all of us.

#### •Sunday Services

The Worship Team serves as a valuable resource, providing helpful feedback to our services each month. The Team this year includes Mark Fox, Shelagh Gallagher, Laura Hamilton, Carol Hartley, Michael Kelley, Dick Kistler, Ben Schomp (Music Team liaison), and Erin Stody. Jay Leach leads the Team; John Herrick and Eve Stevens also participate. This Team discusses each service that we offer as well as our overall approach to worship. Their evaluations and feedback are valuable resources in our planning for future services.

We are keenly aware that the wide range of perspectives in our congregation is nowhere more obviously expressed than in reaction to our Sunday Services. What meets the needs of some members may prove disappointing to others, while the same service can feel deeply spiritual and encouraging to some and overly cerebral and challenging to others.

Aware of that perennial challenge, we are grateful for those who continue to watch and now attend our services consistently and for those who continue to offer supportive messages. Many in our community have taken the time to offer encouragement aware that creating and offering services remains challenging in new and difficult ways.

We were especially gratified to get a recent message from a visitor, someone accessing our livestreamed services. She wrote:

I just wanted to send a note about how much your community's hybrid services mean to me! I live 40 minutes away and wish so badly that life

made it more feasible to regularly come in person now that that is an option. What a blessing that I don't have to- I can settle in with my coffee and still be there in spirit even if it's not 11:15am on Sunday. I've been in an extraordinary season of grief as I deal with a hard diagnosis, the loss of a much wanted pregnancy, and the death of 3 family members. Your sermon on impermanence spoke to me like it was written just for me and I broke into cathartic tears multiple times.

Additionally, my sibling recently let us know she is transgender. She feels burned by the only type of religion she knows and that we grew up with. Your community's acceptance of people that are different and unwanted by many groups such as LGBT+ people, agnostic/atheist people, and those struggling with their faith will help me show her that spirituality/religion is not inherently bad and unwelcoming. When there were multiple pronoun introductions in the service I smiled because I know she will appreciate it so much when I show her later this week.

Thank you to your whole community for being a light in the world.

Such messages of affirmation serve to remind all of us of both why what we do matters so much and of the ways our efforts touch lives that we may never even see.

#### •Adult Religious Education/Spiritual Development

Our ARES D Team under the leadership of Sharon Baker continues to offer a variety of opportunities for religious education and spiritual development for adults. This month's offerings include a Credo session in which former Board chair David Reynolds shared his spiritual journey, a two-part series specifically on spirituality, a documentary film chosen in support of our "Seeing Anew" theme for this year, and the second session offered this fall on our UU Principles.

December's programming will include offerings on the theme of grief and a session offered by our ministers on the proposed 8<sup>th</sup> Principle for Unitarian Universalism.

Sharon and her team welcome suggestions from members. They are also consistently seeking members willing to provide ARES D offerings.

- Children, Youth, and Families

Classes for all ages continue to be held outdoors with participants masked. We moved the start time of class up to 11 a.m. in hopes of allowing parents to find their way to the Sanctuary by 11:15 a.m. Children's Choir has continued to meet before the start of class.

High School Youth advisor, Pete Greene, has been a big help working to get the new firepit area ready, including assembling a storage bin for wood and other supplies. The HS Youth meet around the firepit each Sunday morning and look forward to being able to gather around the fire regularly. Tracy and Scott Hickman built the firepit and surrounding chairs, creating an already very popular new meeting spot for people of all ages.

After a slow start to registration, our CYRE Coordinators kicked off the youth Coming of Age program this month. This year there are twelve youth and twelve adult mentors participating, including two youth from the Unitarian Universalist congregation in Lake Norman. The opening weekend long retreat this month includes workshops for personal reflection and team building activities at Camp Canaan.

Later this month we'll welcome Community Clinical Therapist, Alejandra Davis from Jewish Family Services to lead a session focused on parenting adolescents. The session will provide information on how the pandemic has affected this specific age group developmentally, provide skills for parents to utilize to build their relationship with their teens, and invite parents' questions especially in regard to coping with a child's anxiety and depression.

The Wings of Fire Youth Book Group continues to meet multiple times a month to collaboratively write fanfiction and enjoy activities based on the book series. The Parent Discovery Circle will meet for a second time this month, providing an ongoing opportunity for parents to gather for more focused spiritual reflection and connection-building.

### •Community Building

The Stewardship and Community Building Teams collaborated to create another Member Appreciation event early in the month. This time the event was hosted on the grounds and included a time for arts and crafts for all ages, a Coffee House featuring the musical talent of our members, and an impressive “Turn Back the Clock Dance.” We were pleased with the turnout and made a point of emphasizing to our members how grateful we are for their support of the congregation.

Later in the month, Lib Jones and Tom Nunnenkamp will again graciously open their home’s public garden MapleWalk to the congregation for the second annual Pie Walk at MapleWalk. Members are invited to bring store bought or homemade pies to contribute to a game that features live music and ends when everyone has claimed someone else’s pie to take home for their Thanksgiving table. After the game, we hope participants will mingle, socialize and explore the gardens in their fall splendor.

Following the success of Trunk-or-Treat which saw a large turnout, creative and exuberant participation from our members and boosted CYRE attendance at the end of last month, we are offering a Trunksgiving event this month. This will be paired with the Open Door School’s Harvest Bake Sale. Volunteers will provide coffee from the trunks of their cars while members sample coffee, eat baked goods and socialize. We intend to continue experimenting with how to shake up after service social time both before we can be in Freeman Hall and when we return to indoor Coffee Hour.

### •Discovery Circles

Two Discovery Circles met for the second time this month. We have two large groups with both returning and first-time participants. One Circle will meet via Zoom until further notice and one Circle will meet in-person. This month, due to the installation of more robust fans in the office wing bathrooms, the in-person Circle was able to meet in the Bernstein Room which was a vast improvement over Freeman Hall in terms of being able to hear one another better.



### •Congregational Care

Our Congregational Care Team delivered meals and cards to members in times of crisis and celebration. They are preparing for a large holiday mailing with the goal of sending a thoughtful card to every household in the congregation in hopes of adding still one more way to help people reconnect or connect more deeply with our community.

Our ministers and other professional staff continue to reach out to our members in times of crisis, celebration, and simply to check-in.

### •Building and Grounds

The Building and Grounds Team for 2021-2022 is comprised of Roy Smith (chair), David Johnson, Judy Love, Dan Maples, Tom Moore, Charles Pilkey and Jinny Sullivan with Alesia Hutto serving as staff liaison.

As reported in the month of October, the team discussed ways to make our bathrooms safer as we move toward in-person services. The team concluded that the best possible option would be to increase ventilation by upgrading the fans in the bathrooms in the office area as well as behind Freeman Hall. The board approved up to \$2,000 in funding from the reserves to cover the costs. Dan Maples, team member and HVAC professional coordinated the installation of the new bathroom fans which took place on Tuesday, November 2. A special thank you goes out to Dan Maples and his brother for their hard work.

Other projects on the team's agenda include:

- *Mitigation to save dying trees on the property.* This includes slime flux removal from a white oak located next to playground two, removal of dead branches on various trees and fertilizer treatments for the two magnolia trees located near the Gaynor Road entrance to the property.
- *Repair of the irrigation system* which was completed late October.
- *Creating a cover and lock for the new firepit.* Charles Pilkey has graciously agreed to build the cover and locking mechanism. This work is underway.

- *Hanging the ADA signs* tied to the hearing loop install in the Bernstein room.
- *Sprucing up the Memorial Garden* which includes cleaning and oiling the benches, cleaning the memorial stones and repainting the letters on the center rock in the garden. This work is being done by Jinny Sullivan with the help of Joe Spencer and select members of the gardening group.
- *Clearing the leaves from the drains near the HVAC units* on the back side of the building. This work will be done once majority of the leaves have fallen for the season.

• Intersectional Justice Team

After an October meeting with the representatives of our various Engagement Groups, the Team reconvened in November to explore next steps. As a result, the Team is drafting a new, much more accessible approach to our “Guiding Principles” intended to help make it easier to identify possible opportunities for engagement consistent with our commitment to transformation. The Team is also creating a one-page guide to be used in initial conversations with potential partners/co-conspirators. These new resources will be shared with those currently committed to the work of engagement for their review and feedback.

The Team will devote its December meeting to a conversation with our engagement group volunteers.

All of this work is focused on the collective hope for a significant expansion of opportunities of all kinds in which our members may engage in the coming year. We recognize that it will take time to identify these new opportunities but are hopeful that the coming months will present an array of new ways for our members to commit to the work of transformation through our intersectional justice efforts.